

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7851

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: FMG FIRMNESS ON LABOR UNREST STILL WANTING

REF: LAGOS 973

SUMMARY: IN INITIAL MEETINGS WITH LABOR LEADERS AND MANAGEMENT, NEW LABOR COMMISSIONER EXHORTED BOTH SIDES BUT GAVE LITTLE INDICATION FMG PREPARED ACT DECISIVELY TO END INDUSTRIAL UNREST. HOWEVER, ANOTHER STATE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN FIRM ACTION TO DEAL WITH LOCALIZED STRIKE SITUATION. END SUMMARY

1. NEW LABOR COMMISSIONER ADEFOPE MET SEPARATELY WITH LABOR AND MANAGEMENT GROUPS ON JANUARY 31 AND FEBRUARY 3 RESPECTIVELY. AT EACH SESSION, ADEFOPE URGED HIS INTERLOCUTORS TO CONTINUE PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS ON UDOJI-RELATED ISSUES, BUT OFFERED LITTLE BEYOND EXHORTATIONS TO FACILITATE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. MOST NOTEWORTHY REMARKS WERE PROMISE TO LABOR LEADERS THAT FMG WOULD "DEAL" WITH ANY FIRMS WHICH REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY, AND ASSURANCES TO EMPLOYERS THAT FMG WILL NOT IMPOSE ARBITRARY GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR SETTLEMENTS.

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2. IN THEIR REPLY, LABOR LEADERS PLEDGED COOPERATION, BUT BLAMED

FMG FOR MISHANDLING UDOJI REPORT AND FAILING MADE CLEAR THAT 1972 WAGE FREEZE HAD NOT BEEN BINDING ON PRIVATE SECTOR. EMPLOYERS GROUP QUERIED ADEFOPE ONCE AGAIN ABOUT POSSIBLE FMG FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN PAYING UDOJI ARREARS, EVIDENTLY WITHOUT OBTAINING CLEAR REPLY. (NEITHER ADEFOPE NOR EMPLOYERS REFERRED TO WEEKEND TV STATEMENT BY MIN ESTABLISHMENTS PERMSEC GOBIR THAT FMG HAD TURNED DOWN PRIVATE SECTOR DEMANDS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AS "IMPOSSIBLE REQUEST".)

3. APART FROM JAWBONING BY ADEFOPE, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EVIDENCE OF FMG EFFORT DEAL MEANINGFULLY WITH INDUSTRIAL UNREST. POLICE HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO DEAL WITH LOCALIZED LABOR DISORDERS OR TO PROTECT INSTALLATIONS, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER DETENTIONS OF LABOR LEADERS AND NO FMG ACTION TO ENFORCE FORMAL PROHIBITION OF STRIKES. ONLY RECENT DIRECT INTERVENTION HAS COME IN BENUE-PLATEAU STATE, WHERE GOVERNOR ORDERED OUT TROOPS AND POLICE TO GET POWER SUPPLY RESTORED WHEN ELECTRIC COMPANY WORKERS STRUCK. TROOPS BEING USED TO "PROTECT" WORKERS OPPOSED TO STRIKE AND TO GUARD INSTALLATIONS AGAINST SABOTAGE. (THIS FOLLOWS EXAMPLE OF EARLIER ACTION BY KWARA AND LAGOS STATE GOVERNORS IN DEALING WITH TAXI AND TRUCK DRIVERS WALKOUTS.)

4. IN EDITORIALS FEBRUARY 1 AND 3, AWOLOWO-INSPIRED NIGERIAN TRIBUNE PRODUCED CLEAREST ANALYSIS TO DATE IN NIGERIAN PRESS OF POST-UDJOI SITUATION AND FMG RESPONSE. CALLING ATTENTION TO "NATIONAL CRISIS" CAUSED BY FMG FAILURE COME TO GRIPS WITH REAL ISSUES AT STAKE, TRIBUNE URGED REGIME TO STOP SEEKING SCAPEGOATS IN FORM OF POLITICAL AGITATORS AND TAKE FOLLOWING STEPS: (A) CREATE NEW COMMISSION ON REGRADINGS IN PUBLIC SECTOR SEPARATE FROM EXISTING CIVIL SERVICE; (B) ISSUE CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS, PERHAPS INVOLVING MINIMUM RAISE OF 280 NAIRA CITED BY UDOJI AS ACTUAL COST OF LIVING RISE; AND (C) FMG FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS UNABLE MEET INCREASED WAGE AND ARREARS BILLS. TRIBUNE CONCLUDED THAT USE OF FORCE WAS NOT WORKABLE SOLUTION AND THAT INACTION WOULD RESULT IN FURTHER DETERIORATION OF SITUATION, SO THAT ONLY PROMPT FMG RESPONSE ALONG ABOVE LINES COULD "STOP DRIFT TO CHAOS".

5. COMMENT: ADEFOPE MEETINGS WITH LABOR AND MANAGEMENT SEEM TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE, AS INDUSTRIAL UNREST CONTINUES TO SPREAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN PRIVATE SECTOR (SEPTTEL). TOUGHER FMG LINE OF LAST WEEK NO LONGER IN EVIDENCE AT NATIONAL LEVEL, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT NEW MEASURES REGIME MAY BE CONTEMPLATING TO DEAL WITH PRESENT DRIFT.
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